**Article #1**

**Have Body Issues, Too**

October 6, 2006

NBC News.com

[NEW YORK](http://www.bing.com/maps/?v=2&where1=NEW%20YORK&sty=h&form=msdate) — That guy in the Abercrombie & Fitch ad doesn’t have a head, but does it really matter? His upper body is as sculpted as Michelangelo’s David — all chiseled muscle, washboard abs and not a follicle of chest hair.

You don’t just see him in the provocative ads for Abercrombie, the youth-oriented clothing chain: On billboards and in magazines everywhere, it seems, there’s a male Adonis — buff, sleek, hairless. Like that famous 500-year-old statue, it’s nice to look at. But how does it make the average guy feel?

Maybe not so great. With all the attention these days on the effect paper-thin models and actresses can have on girls and women, it’s worth noting that men can suffer from body image problems, too.

“Body image is not just a concern for women,” says researcher Deborah Schooler, who’s looked into the adverse effects such media images can have on male self-esteem. “It affects men, too, and it demands attention.”

In the past, research has understandably focused mostly on women, and the dangerous eating disorders that can stem from body-related emotional issues. And when looking at men, researchers asked the wrong questions, Schooler argues.

**Stinky, hairy worries**

“Asking men about just weight or size misses the boat,” Schooler, a research associate at Brown University, said in a telephone interview. What men are more concerned about, she says, are other “real-body” factors, like sweat, body hair and body odor.

In a study published last spring and recently featured in Seed magazine, Schooler, then at San Francisco State University, and a colleague looked at 184 male college students. The more media these young men “consumed” — especially music videos and prime-time TV — the worse they felt about those “real” aspects of their bodies, the researchers found.

Further, they found that such negative feelings impacted their sexual well-being, in some cases leading to more aggressive and risky sexual behavior. (The study appeared in the journal Psychology of Men and Masculinity.)

Does all this mean it’s unhealthy for “Average Joes,” as the researchers titled their study, to aspire to the lean, muscular body idealized by Michelangelo and Abercrombie alike? One prominent promoter of men’s fitness argues no — unless, of course, it’s an obsession.

What’s good about that image is that it’s the picture of health,” says David Zinczenko, editor of Men’s Health magazine and a best-selling diet author. “With diabetes rates skyrocketing over the past 70 years, a little more ‘lean’ wouldn’t hurt us.”

Zinczenko points to all the role models with healthy and realistic bodies that have graced magazine covers: George Clooney, Matt Damon, Tom Cruise, Hugh Jackman.

**Rugged vs. smooth**

Indeed, the very concept of the male ideal appears to change with the seasons. “We seem to go from rugged to smooth, rugged to smooth,” says the longtime fitness personality Richard Simmons, of “Sweatin’ to the Oldies” fame. “You’re either the Marlboro Man or you’re the Surfer Boy. You’re a cowboy, or you’re a lean, mean swimming machine.”

Body image, says Simmons, who now has a show on satellite radio, “is a very personal, private thing for guys — something they don’t want to talk about.” But make no mistake, he says: “Getting into a pair of jeans is just as important for a man as a woman. He wants to look good.”

Years ago, Simmons says, when he was overweight, he would turn off the TV when he saw the ultrafit exercise guru Jack LaLanne, because it depressed him. Now, he says, at age 58, 148 pounds and “cute as a button,” he spends his time trying to convince people to appreciate the bodies they have.

However complicated body-image issues are for men, it seems they will always be more fraught for women.

“For boys and men, engaging with these media images is more of a choice,” says Deborah Tolman of the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality in San Francisco. “There’s just not the same requirement for a man in our society to look a particular way. As a man, you can look terrible and still be very well respected.”

As a girl, “you can be the best debater at school,” Tolman says. “But if you’re fat, you don’t get people’s admiration, despite your skill. That’s not true with boys.”

And what of LaLanne, now 92, who so depressed the young Simmons decades ago that he turned off the TV?

Of the incessant media images, the still-avid exerciser says, “Maybe at least that’ll get ’em out doing something!” Aspiring to today’s ideal body is fine, he says, as long as it’s what you want. He deplores, though, the overly muscular type that “looks like they use steroids. Once you start fooling with Mother Nature, you’re in trouble.”

As for his own image issues, LaLanne, who still works out two hours every morning, says they’re soley focused on sticking around a while longer.

“I can’t afford to die,” LaLanne explains. “It would wreck my image.

**Article #2**

**Body Image Issues Are Not Just For Women**

By Jessica Lovejoy

Hufifngton Post: Blog

Posted: 03/26/2014 2:03 pm EDT

Body image issues are prevalent within our perfection-focused society. We are told to conform to impossible beauty standards, to fit a certain body shape and that if we don't look a certain way, we aren't beautiful. We have diet fads and crazes thrust upon us to try and encourage us to get that "perfect" figure that everybody seems to want and we are picked apart by the media and told to rebuild ourselves in their perfect ideal. But women are not the only ones to suffer.

Men are also given the 'perfection' blueprint. They should be strong, muscular, show no emotion. They are told constantly to "*Man Up*" and to "*Be a Man.*"...

Some of you ladies reading this may scoff and roll your eyes, thinking "*Welcome to my life!*" Yes, us women have had to deal with this sort of scrutiny for much of their lives, but we shouldn't be under the assumption that men don't know the feeling. Truth be told, we are all victims of the media. No one is safe.

Only within the last few years have fuller-figured women been in the media. We have our own plus-size models and clothing stores that cater from size 14 upward, and even chain stores carry plus-size clothing. The fuller-figured gentleman does not have this luxury. You will almost never see a heavyset lumberjack-esque man gracing the cover of a clothing catalogue. Or a fashion magazine. Or an in-store poster.

You will, however, see taut, toned, oiled and well-endowed men gracing the glossy pages of almost every magazine you reach for, every chain clothing store and everywhere else. It is an unrealistic expectation for men. And a lot women love the way these male models look, so that adds fuel to the fire in the male mind. Like women, they feel they have to fit this extreme standard in order to be found attractive by the opposite sex.

We, as females, have been dealt a cruel hand by way of the media. Our bodies truly are under scrutiny. The tell us that celebrities with curves are too fat, but when those same celebrities decide to lose weight, they are too thin and the media suggests that they are suffering from an eating disorder.

Now, we don't keep quiet anymore. We kick and scream and tell the media we want more diversity of size, sex and gender, and sometimes they listen. But men, like they've always been taught, remain silent. They don't complain and they go with it. The 'strong, silent type' is how men are conditioned.

When a chubby school boy is bullied by his peers about his weight, barely an eyelid is batted. When he is called a slob by his workmates, he is expected to let it roll right off his back. In today's society, the ideal man should be tall, rugged, handsome, muscular, be well-endowed, be an excellent lover, be strong, emotionless.

A picture has been circulating of a young man holding up a handwritten sign reading "*It's just as hard to be Ken as it is to be Barbie.*" I posted this particular picture on my personal blog to very mixed reviews. One particular blogger reblogged the picture and commented "*Cry harder white boy.*"

This is not the way things like this should be handled. We should be understanding of those men who do suffer from body image issues and eating disorders, we shouldn't be scolding them because we've had to experience this cruelty for longer. As a whole, we all need to understand the damages the media can cause. If we can do that, we will be well on our way to a more body positive society for all.

Undue pressure is put on men by women, their friends, other men and their parents, especially their fathers. "Be a Man" is something that is easily said, but carries a lot of weight. Slamming a man with this phrase is telling him that he has to bury his emotions and his feelings, to take life on the chin and to never show weakness. If he cries, he is weak; if he is kind, he's a wimp. This simple phrase has the ability to be crippling. Telling the young man this will give him extreme feelings of inadequacy. It insinuates that he's not man enough, he's not strong enough.

Nowadays, hitting the gym is in. Bulking and gaining is the next big thing. Being big and muscular is where it's at. Is it any wonder why the thin gentlemen and the chubby gentlemen avoid the gym? At least us women have ladies-only gyms that promote friendship and acceptance to all. Hitting the gym is a big deal for anyone who hasn't ever been, or doesn't go frequently, and that is made harder by the snickers and glares received from more muscular men over by the weights.

The truth is women are not the only ones who can suffer from poor self-image. And to assume that men don't is absurd.

As a society, we're all being force-fed images of this race of "perfect" people. We're told how to look good in certain outfits and how to dress for our shape; we're encouraged to lose the baby weight because Kim Kardashian did so in record time; and we're urged to get fit by Summer.

Whatever your gender, we are not safe from low self-esteem and poor body image caused by much of our society and our media.

Don't buy into it.

**Article #3**

**Six-pack stress: Men worry more about their appearance than their jobs**

Melissa DahlTODAY.com

Feb. 28, 2014 at 5:25 AM ET

“NEW BABY, NEW BODY!” the headline screamed across the pages of [a recent US Weekly](http://i.kinja-img.com/gawker-media/image/upload/199suh2tw7l7sjpg.jpg). The tabloid took a two-page spread to tease actor Channing Tatum about his weight gain after becoming a father, juxtaposing an image of him from “Magic Mike” (“Before: Beefcake”) next to a current paparazzi shot (“Now: Beefy”).

Women tend to dominate the conversation when we talk about body image. And that’s for a good reason: We know that women are judged more harshly by their looks than men are and have been for decades. But the expectations for men are quickly catching up, experts say.

“Guys are just a couple of decades behind women of going down this really awful road,” said David LaPorte, a psychologist at Indiana University of Pennsylvania who has studied body image and social media.

The TODAY/AOL Body Image survey released this week found that men worry about their appearance more than they worry about their [health](http://www.today.com/health/six-pack-stress-men-worry-more-about-their-appearance-their-2D12117283), their family, their relationships or professional success. Fifty-three percent of men say they feel unsure about their appearance at least once a week. Only finances topped looks, with 59 percent of men worrying about money weekly.

Nearly half of the men we surveyed said they think about their personal appearance several times each day. Other findings from the survey:

* 63 percent of guys said they “always feel like (they) could lose weight
* 53 percent don’t like having their picture taken
* 41 percent said they worry that people judge their appearance
* 44 percent feel [uncomfortable](http://www.today.com/health/six-pack-stress-men-worry-more-about-their-appearance-their-2D12117283) wearing swim trunks (not to mention Speedos!)

“From a historical perspective people, have focused more on female body image because women are perceived to have more body image issues,” said Heather Hausenblas, a Florida psychologist who recently published a study looking at men’s body image issues. “But that’s not necessarily the case.”

The cultural expectation for men’s bodies has evolved in the last several decades, experts say. You can see this in a classic study in the late 1990s, which examined G. I. Joe action figures. The study found that in 1964, Joe had what would equal a 32-inch waist and 12-inch biceps. By 1991, Joe had a six-pack and had lost 3 inches off his waist, but bulked his upper arms up to 16 1/2-inch biceps — nearly impossible to attain dimensions.

“Even Halloween costumes for kids now, the superhero costumes come with built-in muscles; you never saw that back in the day,” Hausenblas says.

Because the conversation around body image has been so focused on the feminine perspective for so long, many guys may feel bad about their appearance, but they may not quite know what to do with those feelings.

Stacey Tantleff Dunn, an associate professor of clinical psychology at the University of Central Florida, published a study on this back in 2004. She found that when men were shown pictures of the idealized male figure — lean and young with lots of muscles— the guys became angrier and more depressed.

“I think for a very long time, we really believed that men were more satisfied with their bodies,” Dunn says. “But we weren’t measuring things accurately.” Researchers tended to use the same self-reported surveys for men that they did for women, which were heavily focused on weight loss. “It wasn’t until we started to look at things like muscularity, chest and legs, and other parts, is when we started to see that men, too, had concerns.

“It is true that in the overall evaluation of a person’s physical appearance is still more a part of how women are evaluated than men. There are more stringent standards for female beauty,” Dunn says. “But I think that the standards for men are equally hard to obtain in terms of muscularity leanness and youth.

**Article #4**

**Body-Image Pressure Increasingly Affects Boys**

[JAMIE SANTA CRUZ](http://www.theatlantic.com/jamie-santa-cruz/)MAR 10 2014, 9:00 AM ET

*The Atlantic*

Culturally, we’re becoming well attuned to the pressure girls are under to achieve an idealized figure. But researchers say that lately, boys are increasingly feeling the heat.

A [new study](http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1766495) of a national sample of adolescent boys, published in the January issue of *JAMA Pediatrics*, reveals that nearly 18 percent of boys are highly concerned about their weight and physique. They are also at increased risk for a variety of negative outcomes: Boys in the study who were extremely concerned about weight were more likely to be depressed, and more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as binge drinking and drug use.

The trend toward weight obsession among boys is cause for worry, says Dr. Alison Field, an associate professor of pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital and the lead author of the study. “You want people to be concerned enough about their weight to make healthy decisions,” she says, “but not so concerned that they’re willing to take whatever means it takes—healthy or unhealthy—to achieve their desired physique.”

Of the boys who were highly concerned with their weight, about half were worried only about gaining more muscle, and approximately a third were concerned with both thinness and muscularity simultaneously. Meanwhile, less than 15 percent were concerned only with thinness. Those statistics reflect a major difference between boys and girls when it comes to weight concerns: whereas girls typically want to be thinner, boys are as likely to feel pressure to*gain*weight as to *lose* it.

“There are some males who do want to be thinner and are focused on thinness,” Field says, “but many more are focused on wanting bigger or at least more toned and defined muscles. That’s a very different physique.”

"The media has become more of an equal opportunity discriminator. Men's bodies are not good enough anymore either."

If boys are increasingly concerned about weight, changing representations of the male form in the media over the last decade or two are at least partly to blame. “We used to really discriminate—and we still do—against women” in terms of media portrayals, says Dr. Raymond Lemberg, a Prescott, Arizona-based clinical psychologist and an expert on male eating disorders. “If you look at the Miss America pageant winners or the Playboy centerfolds or the runway models over the years, there’s been more and more focus on thinness.”

But while the media pressure on women hasn’t abated, the playing field has nevertheless leveled in the last 15 years, as movies and magazines increasingly display bare-chested men with impossibly chiseled physiques and six-pack abs. “The media has become more of an equal opportunity discriminator,” says Lemberg. “Men’s bodies are not good enough anymore either.”

Even toys contribute to the distorted messages youngsters receive about the ideal male form. Take action figures, for example, which Lemberg suggests are the male equivalent of Barbie dolls in terms of the unrealistic body images they set up for young boys. In the last decade or two, action figures have lost a tremendous proportion of fat and added a substantial proportion of muscle. “Only 1 or 2 percent of [males] actually have that body type,” says Lemberg. “We’re presenting men in a way that is unnatural.”

In the face of the ideals they’re bombarded with, it’s no surprise that adolescent boys, like waves of girls before them, are falling prey to a distorted image of themselves and their physical inadequacies: [Previous research](http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2001-01714-005) suggests that up to 25 percent of normal weight males nevertheless perceive themselves to be

And given their perception of themselves as too small, it’s also no surprise that boys are searching out means to bring their bodies into conformity with the muscular ideal. A 2012 study of adolescents revealed that muscle-enhancing behaviors are pervasive among both middle school and high school-age males: More than a third reported downing protein powders or shakes in an effort to boost their muscularity; in addition, almost 6 percent admitted to using steroids and 10.5 percent acknowledged using some other muscle-enhancing substance.

The negative effects of steroid use can be particularly significant for adolescents.

Pharmaceutical-grade injectable steroids are a definite concern, says Dr. Rebecka Peebles, co-director of the Eating Disorder Assessment and Treatment Program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, but they’re not the biggest worry, given that they’re difficult to obtain. Of more concern are the “natural” powders or shakes that teens can pick up at their local GNC. The problem, Peebles says, is that “natural” in this case simply means unregulated. “They actually can include all kinds of things in them,” says Peebles. In some cases powder or shake supplements “are actually anabolic androgens and just packaged as a natural supplement.”

The consequences can be severe: Long-term use of steroids is associated with depression, rage attacks, suicidal tendencies, and cardiomyopathies. And the negative effects can be particularly significant for adolescents, since their bodies are going through a period of major growth and development.

In many cases, of course, weight concerns among young males remain at relatively benign levels, and when teens attempt to control their weight, they often do so in comparatively innoccuous ways. But when adolescents demonstrate an extreme focus on physique and begin to engage in potentially dangerous behaviors, it can be a signal of an eating or weight-related disorder—in males just as much as in females.

“The misunderstanding has been the generalization that eating disorders are a woman’s issue,” says Lemberg. “What studies have shown is that, in the last 15 years or so, more men have eating disorders than ever before.” The oft-cited figure is that only about [1 in 10 eating disorders occur in males](https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/research-males-and-eating-disorders), but according to Lemberg, [newer research](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1892232/?report=reader) suggests that the real ratio is probably closer to 1 in 4.

"Instead of doing something unhealthy to get smaller, they're using unhealthy means to become larger."

Although awareness of the risk of weight disorders among males is growing, there is still a problem with under-recognition, Field says, primarily because of the assumption that the disorders look the same in males as they do in females. Current assessments for eating disorders focus on the classical presentation typical of females, but since young men are often more concerned with gaining muscle than becoming thin, they typically don’t present as underweight, as girls often do. They’re also not as likely to starve themselves, use laxatives or induce vomiting; instead, they’re much more likely to engage in excessive amounts of exercise and steroid abuse. “Instead of wanting to do something unhealthy to get smaller, they’re using unhealthy means to become larger,” Field says.

But though the presentation might be different, excessive worries about weight, especially in combination with high-risk behaviors, are no less concerning in males than in females. According to Field, it’s time to sit up and take note of the boys. “Pediatricians and adolescent medicine docs and parents [need] to become aware that they should be listening as much to their sons’ conversations about weight as their daughters’.”